



Anika Van Eaton, Managing
Trustee
Vickie Choitz, Managing Trustee

City of Somerville Job Creation & Retention Trust Monthly Meeting

Trustees
Thomas Bent
Silvana Dinka
Jim Hachey
Jacob Luria
Wilfred Mbah
Rachel Nadkarni
Rand Wilson

Meeting Minutes

Location: Hybrid: Online via Zoom Meeting AND In-Person at Tufts Administration Building
(167 Holland St, Somerville, MA 02144)

Date: May 15, 2025

Time: 6:30 PM

Attendance

- Trustees: Thomas Bent, Vickie Choitz, Silvana Dinka, Jim Hachey, Wilfred Mbah, Rachel Nadkarni, Anika Van Eaton, and Rand Wilson
- Economic Development Staff: William Blackmer

Meeting Minutes

A Van Eaton: Meeting called to order at 6:34pm. Quorum established with 8 trustees in attendance.

W Blackmer: House rules about technology delivered.

1. Review and Approval of past meeting minutes

- a. Vote to approve March 25th meeting minutes

Motion: V Choitz makes motion to approve March 25th meeting minutes. T Bent seconds the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 8-0.

2. Review Received and Estimated Linkage Fees for 2025

W Blackmer: Since our March meeting, we received a final payment from the developments at 5 Middlesex in Assembly Square and from 808 Windsor in Boynton Yards. The current linkage fee balance sits at around \$2.2M. There's an additional approximately \$900,000 we are anticipating from 2 projects that are wrapping up.

Currently, we aren't projected to receive any funds in 2026 or 2027.

V Choitz: Does the \$2.2M balance account for obligations, such as the \$400,000 obligated for the Good Municipal Jobs Training Program?

W Blackmer: Yes.

3. Discuss Survey Results Re: Federal Funding and its Impact on Workforce Development and Education Systems

A Van Eaton: Following our discussion at the March 25th meeting, W Blackmer sent out a survey to our partner organizations and compiled the survey results in a memo. The survey was completed by 13 organizations, 12 of which have received, or are currently receiving funding from the JCRT. Most of the organizations focus on job coaching and career readiness, small business and entrepreneurial support, job training, and support services. The majority are receiving federal funding to deliver these services and 10 out of 13 organizations have been impacted by federal funding cuts or executive orders. These funding cuts and orders has resulted in loss of staff, pauses to program delivery, revision of curriculum and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) language. Nearly all

organizations are concerned and face uncertainty about the impact proposed policies may have on FY26 funding at the federal, state, and corporate levels. Funds mentioned include Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, Community Services Block Grants (CSBG), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), YouthWorks, Community Mitigation Fund, Medicaid, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Suggestions that were mentioned to the JCRT include continuing to make non-federal and non-state funding available, pass along other funding opportunities and resources, offer multiyear grants, simplify application and renewal process, increase flexibility of use of funds to meet current needs, and diversify the types of programs funded. What stands out to Board members from these results.

V Choitz: I am not surprised by the results, but it was helpful to see the validation of the impact that federal funding cuts and executive orders are having. Additionally, the budget that is going through Congress right now shows severe cuts to this type of programming. This does seem like an emergency situation. Additionally, some funds that are disappearing are relatively flexible funding sources. Our job training programs are reliant on participants having access to support services.

W Mbah: It would be helpful to know how each partner individually responded. Can you share this with the Board?

W Blackmer: Yes, I will follow up to share individual responses.

R Nadkarni: How do Board members feel about releasing a truly “open” request for proposals (RFP) ask organizations to propose what they would like to do with the funding. This is a different approach from the very targeted RFPs that the Trust has released in which we’ve been asking for proposals of very specific programs. Also, can we learn more about the \$2M balance. Are we earning interest on this balance? What options do we have to build on or enhance these funds?

T Bent: There are a lot of organizations facing funding cuts, but we must ensure that the JCRT spending stays in line with the purposes set out for the jobs linkage fees. I would caution being too flexible about how the money is spent.

A Van Eaton: I’m reviewing the text from the declaration of trust and I think there is space for us to be less narrow in writing our RFP scopes than we have been in the past. Our Trust’s purpose is to assist in the creation and maintenance of employment and career opportunities within and near the city of Somerville for the residents of the city of Somerville limits use of all trust property to these purposes. It then lists about ten purposes. It might be helpful for these documents to be re-sent to all Board members.

S Dinka: What is the timeframe for us to use our current budget?

A Van Eaton: We are required to spend the funds within 5 years of them coming in. Given the upcoming funding picture and the results of the survey, it will be important for the Board to keep checking in about the pace with which we expend funds.

V Choitz: I love Rachel and Anika’s ideas about a more open RFP that still sticks to the parameters of our bylaws and governing documents. We should review the list of eligible purposes and determine what we want to include. If we switch to this RFP process I would like to beef up the expectations that applicants justify why they need the funds, what they will use them for, and what their projected outcomes will be. We will need really solid information in selecting applications from a competitive pool.

W Blackmer: With this new approach we would also want all of the Board members, not just a subcommittee, to be involved in the drafting of the RFP and the proposal review and evaluation process.

S Dinka: We may need to prioritize programs that result in employment over programs that provide upskilling but do not necessarily have a job outcome.

R Nadkarni: We may want to consider interviewing to evaluate the merit of the programs that submit proposals.

A Van Eaton: I appreciate that suggestion. I do want to make sure that we do listen to the survey feedback asking for a simple application and reapplication process. We should make sure that questions we ask of the proposers are necessary for us to decide what proposals to fund.

So, next steps would be finding out options for investing or interest for linkage fees, considering the timing of the RFP, but also sharing the governing documents for the board to review. Points brought up in tonight's conversation and the survey results can inform the drafting of the RFP.

4. Review of Active Programs and Obligations

a. Update on Childcare Career Advancement Request for Proposals (RFP)

A Van Eaton: This RFP is out now and is due 5/23/25.

b. Update on Good Municipal Jobs Request for Proposals (RFP)

A Van Eaton: This RFP is scheduled for release on 5/21/25. There will be a hybrid info session on 6/2/25 and then the RFP will be due 8/15/25.

c. Vote to approve no-cost extension for Franklin Cummings Tech grant through December 31, 2026.

A Van Eaton: The request letter and a summary of the request were shared in the meeting materials

Motion: W Mbah makes motion to approve no-cost extension for Franklin Cummings Tech grant through December 31, 2026. S Dinka seconds the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 7-0. J Hachey had to leave the meeting prior to this vote.

d. Update Regarding Financial Literacy Subcommittee

A Van Eaton: William will reach out to try and reschedule this subcommittee meeting in the next couple weeks.

The Board discussed scheduling for upcoming meetings. A doodle poll will be sent to identify a time to meet in June and the Board tentatively set the meeting to be recurring on the third Thursday of the month beginning in July 2025.

5. Adjournment

Motion: W Mbah makes motion to adjourn. V Choitz seconds the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 6-0. R Wilson had to leave the meeting prior to this vote.

Meeting Materials:

- 5/15 Mtg Notice and Agenda
- draft 3/25/25 Mtg Minutes
- JCRT Received and Estimated Linkage Fees
- JCRT Investment Priority Tracker
- April JCRT Memo Re: Federal Funding Survey of Partners & FC No-Cost Extension Request
- FC Tech No-Cost Extension Request Letter